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FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: PARLIAMENT SPEAKER CAUSES DISSENT IN RULING PARTY

REF: SANAA 258

Classified By: DCM Angie Bryan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) On February 11, President Saleh's choice was elected Speaker of Parliament. General unhappiness with the new speaker and the strong arm tactics used to elect him have alienated many in the ruling party. Considering the number of issues already facing the ROYG, the President's decision to force this issue may have been ill advised. End Summary.

GPC MEMBERS UNHAPPY ABOUT AL RAIE

2. (C) Despite the victory of all four of the ruling party's candidates in February 11's parliamentary leadership election (reftel), a rift appeared within the General People's Congress (GPC). Hints of dissent arose early in the process and appeared to focus on unpopular (then acting) Parliament Speaker Yahya al-Raie. On February 2, after the opening of the new Parliament session, GPC MP Nabil Basha told POL/E Chief that he doubted the GPC could gather sufficient votes to elect al-Raie outright. He predicted that the President would delay the selection of a new speaker as long as possible to allow al-Raie to remain acting speaker. Even after al-Raie's election, Basha continued to describe party dissent. "There was no consensus on al-Raie," he told POL/E Chief on February 12.

3. (C) Party discontent was clear during the February 10 GPC party meeting to nominate candidates for Deputy Speaker. Former GPC MP and current member of the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption Dr. Saadaldeen Talib told PolOff on February 10 that his contacts had informed him that only about 130 of the GPC's 240 members attended the meeting. Abdul-Karim Mohamed al-Aslamy, GPC MP and Deputy Chairman of the Parliament Finance Committee, told POL/E Chief at the same function that he and many other members were deliberately boycotting the meeting in protest. Noting al-Aslamy's discontent, opposition Islah MP Sadiq al-Baadani quipped, "we shouldn't call it (the GPC) the ruling party, we should call it the party of the ruler." While the broad margin of victory enjoyed by al-Raie initially appeared to indicate that the GPC leadership had pulled its members into line, final analysis showed that problems remain. Basha told Pol/E Chief on February 12 that he knew of at least 30 GPC members who, in spite of pressure from the party leadership, voted for the opposition candidate, Ali Ashal.

STRONG ARM TACTICS

4. (C) On February 10, al-Aslamy told POL/E Chief of the strong arm tactics used by GPC Secretary General (and former

Prime Minister) Abdulkader Bajamal to control the candidate selection process. To quell the groundswell of resistance to al-Raie's nomination, Bajamal pointedly reminded the GPC members that 2009 is an election year, and noted that, without the support of the Party leadership, candidates would be unlikely to be reelected. Even after agreement was reached on al-Raie's nomination, the pressure tactics continued. In announcing the February 10 elections to choose the GPC candidates for the Deputy Speaker positions, Bajamal reportedly told the party membership, "we will allow you to elect the nominees for Deputy Speaker. If you elect the wrong ones, then we will select the nominees for you."

COMMENT

¶5. (C) President Saleh maintains control of the GPC. (Note: Saleh is also the GPC's Chairman. End Note.) His decision to force his choice for Parliament Speaker, however, may have been a poor one. Already under considerable domestic pressure, Saleh can ill afford to open a new battle front within his own party.

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